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RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 0016  
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC//OSD/ISA/EAP  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1249  
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SUBJECT: USING MEDICINE TO OVERCOME THE NORTH-SOUTH IMPASSE

REF: SEOUL 01080  
SEOUL 00815  
08 SEOUL 496

¶1. (U) This message is from the American Presence Post (APP) in Busan, Republic of Korea.

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: Green Doctors, a Busan-based NGO running the only clinic in the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC), hopes to open a 150-bed hospital in the near future. In addition to providing medical care, Dr. Cheong Gun, the founder of Green Doctors, sees this hospital as a political tool to help overcome the current impasse between North and South Korea by giving the two countries a humanitarian issue on which they could cooperate. END SUMMARY

¶3. (U) In its four years of existence, Green Doctors has serviced over 145,000 patients in the KIC assisting an average of 200-300 patients per day, and is considered better than most medical care in North Korea (ref C). With a staff of three South Korean medical professionals and 21 North Koreans, including four doctors and a dentist, the clinic, in its own way, symbolizes both the struggle between the Two Koreas and their potential for cooperation. Like the peninsula, the clinic is divided in half by a locked gate, with North and South Korean doctors in their respective halves treating patients of their citizenship. Cheong has fought somewhat successfully to keep this gate open and allow doctors to treat patients of either nationality. However, he often finds the gate locked on his return trips, prompting him to demand it reopened.

¶4. (SBU) Even with the recent difficulties in North-South Relations and slowing business in the KIC (ref A and B), it is business as usual at the Green Doctors clinic. In Cheong's perspective, the clinic is one of the few issues on which North and South are currently cooperating. To expand service, Cheong has planned a 150-bed hospital within the KIC. Unlike the current clinic, the hospital would not be divided by North-South lines. Cheong also believes that North Korean officials would make the two-hour drive from Pyongyang for service at the hospital. Given the current difficulties in North-South negotiations, Cheong believes the two sides need a non-political, non-economic issue to break through the impasse. Given the success of the clinic, the new hospital could serve such a purpose, according to Cheong.

¶5. (SBU) Although Green Doctors secured 9,900 sq meters of land in the KIC three years ago, the current deterioration in North-South relations has made fundraising difficult. Similarly, Cheong opined that he has received less support from relevant ROKG offices since North Korea's recent provocative actions. To further his cause, Cheong sent a letter on July 7 requesting support from ROK First Lady Kim Yun-ok, who publicly congratulated Green Doctors for its work in the KIC in July 2008.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: In addition to its work in the KIC, Green Doctors has an impressive track record providing free medical services in Vietnam, Mongolia, China, Burma, Thailand, Indonesia, and Cambodia. The organization's dedication is clear. If successful, in addition to being one of the most advanced medical facilities in North Korea, the hospital would serve as a microcosm of the KIC -- a place where citizens from North and South Korea could freely work together.

STEPHENS